2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

593 home on the marriage of one of their sisters to take a wife in his name. If he had only half-brothers it is feared that they may try to 'blot out' the dead man's name and use the cattle to marry wives in their own names. To prevent this it is said that the dead man's mother's people may, if there was no close friendship between him and his half-brothers, arrange for his uterine sister to marry a wife to his name. Her husband then takes the cattle which would have gone to the dead man on the marriages of his sisters and makes the arrangements for his wife to marry a wife to his name with them, though he does not himself cohabit with this wife. Nuer say that in affairs of this kind a sister's son can be trusted better than a paternal half-brother. As I have mentioned in the last chapter, the disposal of widows may occasion rancour among paternal half-brothers.

●604 The distinction between full and half-brothers runs right the way through the Nuer kinship system. Nuer say that '*gurlen kwi dwiel*', 'your father's brother on the side of the hut' (his uterine brother), is a real father to you, but '*gurlen kwi luak*', 'your father's brother on the side of the byre' (his paternal half-brother), is only a father in his talk. If your father is dead and you are still a boy he may take advantage of your youth to deprive you of your rights. Similarly, Nuer say that the *nar mande* (or *nar kwi dwiel*), the mother's uterine brother, is a real mother and father, but not the *nar gvande* (or *nar kwi luak*), the mother's paternal half-brother. I once asked a youth who was threatening to fight his maternal uncle over an insult he considered he had received from him, 'But surely he is your maternal uncle?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'but only a maternal uncle on the father's side.'

593 When we speak of uncles on the byre-side we speak of half-brothers of the parents who own their own herds and homesteads, maybe in different villages, districts, or even tribes. They have already become distinct points of growth on the lineage branch. There is no pretence here that they are undivided. This dogma does not go beyond the family: sons in relation to their father. As we have seen, within the family it is the assertion of an ideal in the face of recognized social actualities which only partly conform to it; for the difference between full and half-brothers, or between the huts, in a family is both marked and a matter of concern to Nuer. It is clearly connected with the lineage structure and with the importance of the maternal kin in social life, which is related

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

between a ghost-son and his genitor where they are paternal kin, for the genitor stands in the place of the pater and has the same desire to see his sons, having probably no legal children of his own, happy and wealthy as a pater has. A ghost-son is generally content to see his genitor dispose of his cattle during his boyhood, knowing that when he is old enough to marry he will be provided for. 593

When a man marries a wife in the name of his maternal uncle a difficult situation may arise. Such a marriage usually takes place when the dead man has no close paternal kinsmen; and the sister's son often marries the wife with part of the uncle's herd and takes charge of the remainder of it. In childhood the relations between parents and children are the same as those in a ghost-family in which pater and genitor are paternal kinsmen, but when the sons grow up differences between them and their genitor are likely to be acute if the genitor has abused his trust. It is less an abuse for a paternal kinsman to use the dead man's cattle for his own purposes, since they both belong to the same agnatic and cattle-group, than for a sister's son to do the same, for the sister's son is not a member of the lineage of the pater and has no rights in their cattle. When the daughters he begets by his maternal uncle's wife are married he ought to keep the cattle of their bridewealth till the brothers of the girls are old enough to marry with them. Nevertheless, he may take advantage of their minority. Since the dead man's paternal kin are unlikely to be very close kin, they may do little beyond protesting, especially if, as is probable, the sister's son lives among them; but there is almost certain to be bad feeling in the family. The position of the sons is difficult, and the conflict between their regard for their genitor, whom they have always regarded as their father in every practical sense, and their resentment at the injustice done to them may only be solved by their going eventually to join the household of some paternal kinsman of their pater.

If he is to avoid trouble a man who cohabits with his brother's widow must likewise remember that her children, whether begotten by the dead man or by himself, are his wards and that he is trustee and not owner of his brother's herd. When the eldest son has been initiated into manhood he takes the place of his pater as head of the family. If his guardian is wise he will respect his nephew's independent status and will build him a byre next to his own and give him the cattle to which he is heir. Then difficulties between them need not arise, and his nephews will retain their 593 604

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

593 604 respect and affection for him and will share their cattle with him. But Nuer are greedy where cattle are concerned, and the temptation to use a dead brother's herd and the bridewealth of his daughters to marry wives for himself during the minority of his sons is sometimes more than a man can resist. When his nephews grow up they find that he has no cattle left for them to marry with and they are resentful and want to know what has happened to their father's herd. A nephew in this position is unlikely to move away from the village in which he has been brought up because it is his own village where his paternal kinsmen live, but his relations with his uncle may become strained and he may harden in his insistence on his full legal rights in future instead of accepting a friendly give-and-take arrangement. If exasperated beyond endurance, he may go to live elsewhere, perhaps with his maternal kin. Here again conflicting loyalties may make a youth's position difficult, for as a son he feels he ought to respect and obey his father and as a nephew he feels he ought to insist on his rights. Trouble is most likely to arise when a boy falls under the guardianship of a brother of his dead pater and is not begotten by him.

593 The opposition between the legal family and the natural family is most evident when a son is born in widow-concubinage. In ghost-marriage and leviratic marriage the genitor is a legal substitute for the pater, but the genitor of a child born in widow-concubinage has no such status. When the brothers of the pater are alive and family feeling is strong they insist on his sons being initiated in his home and living with them afterwards. Nuer say that an orphan who has been initiated at his uncles' home and has rights in cattle there will not want to leave it. They are likely also to bring the dead man's daughters to live with them so that they can be married from their home. The genitor cannot deny them their right when they tell him that they want the children of their cattle. Thus it often happens that a boy is brought up in one social group but belongs legally to, and later joins, a different social group. The sentiments of childhood attach him to the home of his mother and genitor, and while he is small he does not think of any other place as his home. But when he reaches manhood the sense of paternal kinship so strong in Nuer, and desire for the cattle of his heritage, attract him to the village of his true paternal kinsmen.

If a dead man has brothers they are almost certain, especially if

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

Nuer would say, who are also referred to collectively and in a general way of speaking as the *gaatgwanlene*, the children of paternal uncles. We have noted how these are divided off as the kin *kwi gwan*, on the father's side (of the family), in division of bridewealth, and also how among themselves they are more or less exempted from the prohibition which defines as incest congress with the wives of kinsmen because their wives are all wives of the lineage. We have further noted that consciousness of being members of a social group with common ancestors and symbols and corporate rights in territory and, within the limited range of nuclear kin, common interests in cattle and wives and common residence pull the children of their wives to the father's side. The second broad type comprises the cognates who are not agnates, the kin on the hut-side, whom Nuer describe collectively and in a general sense as *gaatnyiet*, the children of girls or daughters—that is to say, all kin to whom a man is related through women. Either they are children of daughters of his lineage or he is the son of a daughter of their lineage. Within the restricted range of reference of bridewealth distribution these are the kin *kwi man*, on the mother's side (of the family). They are the kinsmen with whose wives it is incestuous to have congress. We have earlier noted how important this concept is in the network of kinship ties of any Nuer community, with regard both to interpersonal relations and also to the establishing of links with its dominant lineage. I shall have occasion later to emphasize further its significance in this respect in considering the kinship system in relation to society as a whole. The relationships in which these two types are, as it were, summed up and contrasted for a Nuer are that of the *gwanlen*, the paternal uncle, and that of the *nar*, the maternal uncle.

The *gwanlen*, particularly the father's paternal half-brother, is portrayed by Nuer as the wicked uncle and is contrasted with the good uncle, the *nar*, particularly the mother's uterine brother. Both youths and maidens have often told me that they are more at one with their mothers' brothers than with their fathers' brothers and with their mothers' sisters than with their fathers' sisters. 'Wa! Your *nar* is far better (than your *gwanlen*)', said a Nuer to me once, expressing with force this common partiality. When I asked him why the maternal uncle was better he gave no further answer than the usual reply to this question: 'Because he is the brother of your mother'. However, I pressed him for a fuller

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

•604 explanation, and he told me, as I have often heard from other Nuer, that you can rely on your maternal uncle for assistance. Even if your mother is dead he will gladly give you cattle to marry with, because you are the son of his sister and an orphan, whereas your paternal uncle, especially your father's half-brother, helps you reluctantly. If your paternal uncle is angry with you he may split your head open with his club, but however angry with you your maternal uncle may be, he would never strike you, for you are his sister's son.

I have been told time and again that Nuer youths whose fathers have died prefer to live with their maternal uncles, if they are full brothers to their mothers, than with their paternal uncles, though the father's full brother is regarded as a less formidable person than the father's paternal half-brother. The stereotyped portrait of a father's brother in the role of a step-father is of a selfish and mean man. Nuer say that if your father has died while you are still a child and his brother has taken your mother in leviratic union he will be kind to you for your mother's sake while you are a child, but when you grow up he will try to bully you and will be stingy with you. He will favour his own children and neglect you. Even if you are older than his own sons he may try to obtain wives for them first. What is worse, he may try to use your father's cattle and the cattle of your sisters' marriages for this purpose, or to marry another wife for himself, while you are still little and unable to protect your own. Your mother may be weak and consent to this wrong. His wives may give food to their sons who are still small boys while you, a man, have to wait for your portion; and when those boys are grown into men their mothers may hide food for them so that when you have shared the common bowl with them and rise from it still hungry they can eat again in secret and be filled.

A paternal uncle's obligation to assist his nephew to marry is another cause of bad feeling between them. We have noted that payment of bridewealth to kin is a legal obligation which involves the very principle of kinship and may in no way be avoided. The legal title to bridewealth on a girl's marriage implies a moral obligation to contribute cattle, though fewer than those received, to help her brother to marry, but it is an obligation which depends for its strength on personal relations and on ability to assist. It may not be carried out, and if it is not carried out the uncle does not

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

thereby forfeit his title to bridewealth on the marriages of other sisters. Nevertheless, public opinion would censure a paternal uncle, or his son should he be dead, were he to refuse assistance, especially if, as is normally the case, they are living in the same or nearby homesteads. Paternal uncles are expected to help each of their nephews to marry in turn and to make a more generous contribution—perhaps two or three beasts at each marriage—than that looked for from the maternal uncle, for their nephews are their sons and are marrying wives to their lineage. The bulk of the bridewealth is provided by the family, but as the cattle of married brothers, though owned by them separately, are often herded together and tethered in the same kraal, the contributions by the father and his brothers may come from a single herd. Indeed, in a sense it is not easy to make a rigid distinction between what the father gives and what the uncles give towards the expenses of a marriage. The obligation on uncles is weightiest when they are full brothers of the father, live with or near him, and are on friendly terms with him. A half-brother of the father, especially if they live in different villages or districts, may feel that he has done all that should be required of him if he gives a beast on the marriage of one of his nephews. The younger brothers of the bridegroom must look for help to their other paternal half-uncles when it is their turn to marry.

The rivalry and conflict between paternal kin of which I have spoken comes out most clearly in relations between *gaatgwanlen*, male ortho-cousins, the sons of brothers, particularly of paternal half-brothers. Enmity between half-brothers is as far as possible suppressed, or at least not given public expression, on account of the father. If brothers disagree they separate, but they try to avoid scandal. Difference of generations inhibits either familiarity or declared hostility between a man and his paternal uncles, but the sons of these uncles are of his own generation and he can be as intimate or quarrelsome with them as he pleases. He is bound to them by ties of loyalty which do not derive from, or depend on, either mutual affection or common affection for a third person, as is the case with half-brothers who share the same father, and which generally necessitate close contact in situations likely sometimes to engender conflict. It is perhaps this contradiction between social bonds and personal feelings which gives rise to the joking or teasing relationship between ortho-cousins.

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

605
195

I will not discuss here the use of obscene language in general among the Nuer but only the custom called *leng*, conventionalized exchange of obscenities, which is regarded as being pre-eminently a form of behaviour between paternal cousins of the same sex and generation, generally between males, whether they be first cousins or farther removed. It would be most improper for a man to exchange obscenities in this way with other kinsmen. A man says to a paternal cousin '*ban leng*', 'let us have a slanging-game'. Then they abuse each other in turn, prefacing each epithet with the exclamation *awai yah!* The exchange often develops into a contest to see which of the two can continue the longest without repeating himself. As Nuer are practised and have a fertile imagination in such matters, the duel may be kept up for several minutes before one of the men cannot think of an obscenity he has not already used and thus loses the duel, which is closed by shouts of laughter on both sides. The obscenities, which are the most extravagant I have ever heard, cover, with many elaborations, every possible kind of sexual act, the sodomy motif being the most prominent, and refer to the partners to the duel themselves and their fathers, mothers, sisters, paternal and maternal aunts and uncles, grandparents, and sweethearts, though only terms of relationship and not proper names are used. The partners also call one another Dinka, witches, spongers, bastards, gluttons, and so forth. No offence is taken at the foulest sexual references to relatives, though I was told that paternal first cousins ought to avoid mentioning the father and the paternal aunt—'you do not do this because of your father'—and to restrict their observations to the mother and persons on her side of the family. Paternal cousins farther removed appear to feel no embarrassment in mentioning the father and his sister. However, paternal cousins avoid such exchanges in the presence of unrelated persons of the opposite sex.

•604

The *wac*, father's sister, is not so prominent in the picture of family portraits as the father's brother because she is generally a member of a different local community, but Nuer say that she is like the father's brother: 'Your *wac* is your *gwanlen* also.' She may treat you badly when you are little, and even if she is kind she does not love you: 'The ones she loves are her grandchildren and the children of her sisters.' A Nuer told me that 'she thinks of you merely as "*gatdemar*" ("son of my brother")', by which he meant that she does not think of you as '*gatda*' ('my son'). She may talk

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

friendly with you, but really she cares nothing for you and always favours her own children at your expense should you be living at her home. 'Your father's sister blesses you with her mouth, meaning nothing, but she cares nothing for you in her heart.' Nuer contrast her, especially the father's paternal half-sister, with the mother's sister, as they contrast the father's brother with the mother's brother. When you visit her she lets you remain hungry till evening instead of preparing a meal for you at once as a mother's sister would do. They also say that it is very likely she was resentful of your mother and takes it out of you. Nevertheless, a paternal aunt may be asked to assist her nephew to marry and with the consent of her husband, or son, she may contribute a heifer, though she is only likely to do so once. If there are several aunts and several nephews, one of the aunts will be asked for assistance on the marriage of one nephew and another aunt on the marriage of another nephew. Moreover, though the father's sister belongs to the 'bulls', her children are 'children of daughters' and the relationship of father's sister's son has the kindlier associations of this type of kinship.

It is only fair to say that the account given above is a gross distortion of the usual relations of a man with his paternal uncles and aunts, and indeed Nuer readily accept that they may be harmonious. They admit that many an orphan finds a true father in his father's brother and a true mother in his father's sister. They say that much depends on the character of the person concerned, the temper of relations between uncle or aunt and father and mother, and above all whether father and uncle have lived together, which often enough means whether they were full brothers, for then the uncle is one of those who has brought his brother's son up from childhood and regards him as much a son as a nephew.

I would remark here that, as was noted in our review of Nuer ideas about incest, though all paternal uncles and aunts are agnates, those who are uterine brothers and sisters of the father, while not, of course, in the Nuer sense of the word *gaatnyiet*, seem to partake in a kind of way of the quality of kinship through women just as, in a higher degree, the uterine brother does, for their kinship with the father is both on the byre-side and on the hut-side. They share with the father not only his paternal kin but his maternal kin also.

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

602 Nevertheless, distortion though it may be, it is a distortion which by over-emphasizing certain features of relationship on the paternal side brings out one of their essential characteristics, the personal rivalries generated by corporate life and common interests. It is understandable that those who live together have many opportunities for quarrelling and that their common interests, especially in regard to cattle in which they all have rights, provide occasion for it. A Nuer is bound to his paternal kin from whom he derives aid, security, and status, but in return for these benefits he has many obligations and commitments. Their often indefinite character may be both evidence of, and a reason for, their force, but it also gives ample scope for disagreement. Duties and rights easily conflict. Moreover, the privileges of agnatic kinship cannot be divorced from authority, discipline, and a strong sense of moral obligation, all of which are irksome to Nuer. They do not deny them, but they kick against them when their personal interests run counter to them. We noted in the last chapter that Nuer realize that the paternal half-brother relationship is one in the nature of which there are cleavage and opposition. In the nephew-paternal uncle and the ortho-cousin relationships the opposition is perhaps less tense because the persons belong to different families and households and their interests are more divergent, and because less effort has to be made to repress antagonisms. In their interrelations we have in embryo and between persons the same complementary tendencies towards fission and fusion that we find between opposed segments in the lineage system which derives from these paternal relationships as branches derive from twigs on a tree. We shall later see how the relation of the agnatic type of kinship to the type of relationship through women, and the relation of the lineage system to the whole society, are of the same pattern. First we must consider the categories of kinship on the mother's side of the family.

• 604 Nuer say of the maternal uncle that he is both father and mother, but most frequently that 'he is your mother'. He is a man's great supporter when he is in trouble. If a youth has committed adultery or involved himself in some other trouble, and his father's people refuse to aid him, he goes to his maternal uncle for help. He will help his sister's son for his mother's sake. Nuer say also that 'your maternal uncle will give you a cow and its calf to start a herd, and more cattle when you marry'. Indeed, he is expected

2. Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

at any time to give you a goat or a spear, or even a cow if he can afford it, when you are in need of these things, though you ought some day to make return to him. The relationship between sister's son and mother's brother is one of tenderness. Nuer have often told me how indulgent a mother's brother is with the little children of his sisters. They say, for example, that if a boy living at his maternal uncle's home feels out of sorts and does not want to spread out the cattle-dung to dry in the sun or to perform some other domestic task of boyhood, and the sons of the home think he is shirking work and abuse him, their father will admonish them to leave his sister's child in peace. If this happened at the home of a paternal uncle he would support his own sons and upbraid his nephew for laziness and even beat him. If a man's father is dead and his father's brothers have few cattle or are unfriendly towards him, he may go to live with his maternal uncle, and the uncle's wife will cook for him. He may even marry from the uncle's herd. Also, a youth during his father's lifetime often visits his mother's kinsmen and stays with them for weeks together. A Nuer lad has always a second home if his maternal uncle is a full brother to his mother. A mother's half-brother is regarded as a more distant person.

A man particularly looks for assistance from his mother's brothers when he wants to marry. If a mother's full brother likes his sister's eldest son he may give him two or three cows to help him get a wife, and he may make further contributions on the marriages of the younger sons. However, as in the case of the paternal half-uncle, a maternal half-uncle considers that he has done his duty if he assists one son of his sister's family to marry. He expects his next nephew to marry to approach his brothers for help. Even a maternal full uncle is not obliged to contribute to his nephew's bridewealth. If he refuses aid he cannot be deprived of cattle on the marriages of the young man's sisters. Any assistance he may give is regarded as an act of friendship and not as a return for the cattle he receives. The only cattle the mother's people are obliged to pay to her sons are a male and a female calf, which in eastern Nuerland are known as the *ghok jookni*, the cattle of the ghosts. This claim becomes due when the mother has reached the menopause.

The mother's brother-sister's son relationship is marked by a number of special observances. A youth at his initiation may ask

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

his maternal uncle—generally it would be the mother's uterine brother—for a bull-calf with the markings of the new ox-name he has taken. Though he cannot demand it as a right, he may curse his uncle's herd so that the male calves die if he is refused his request. It seems that the customary way of making this request is for the nephew to make an incision on the ear of the calf he desires. A man may not bury his maternal uncle, and I believe that a mother's brother should not bury his sister's son. Were a man to bury his maternal uncle he would die of *keth nara*, a disease which is said to cause white patches on the skin. The same disease may attack a man who hears that his maternal uncle has been wounded or cut himself severely and does not visit him and place some of the blood on his foot. Should the nephew not hear of the uncle's wound and contract the disease, he visits him and gets him to rub soot from the bottom of a pot on the affected surfaces. A man and his maternal uncle may not tether their cattle together in the same kraal, though the cattle may graze together. If one of the uncle's beasts dies the nephew may not skin it, for were he to do so he would destroy the uncle's herd and people would say that 'he had spilt the cattle of his uncle to the ground'. An uncle may not give his sister's son a spear-shaft, for the gift might cause him serious injury. A man and his sister's son must not use the same sleeping-hide or sleep in the same hut. These rules, especially those which forbid a man tethering his cattle in his uncle's kraal, skinning his uncle's beasts, and sleeping in the same hut as his uncle, seem almost designed to keep the two apart, to prevent a youth identifying himself with his maternal kin instead of with his paternal kin.

The maternal uncle is the kinsman who most often blesses a lad in the Nuer way of blessing, by spitting on the head. Grandparents may sometimes do this, but other relatives rarely. If a man comes frequently to visit his sister and partakes of her hospitality and does not occasionally spit on her child's head, the child may get the disease I have mentioned above. It is also said that when a maternal uncle rises during the day from a nap in the ashes of the hearth and his sister's son rubs the ashes off his back he must then spit on the lad's head. But if the blessing of a maternal uncle is desired, his curse is believed to be among the worst, if not the worst, a Nuer can receive, for, unlike the father, a maternal uncle may curse a youth's cattle, as well as his crops

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

and fishing and hunting, if he is disobedient or refuses a request or in some other way offends him. The curse may also prevent the nephew from begetting male children. Nuer therefore, however angry they may be, avoid swearing at their maternal uncles: 'Above all you must not swear at your maternal uncle. You might even think of swearing at your father but never, never, at your maternal uncle.'

It is the privilege of a maternal uncle's wife to swear abusively at her husband's sister's son. She does this teasingly and not in anger. He will not answer her back unless he is of about her age. A mother's brother's wife is often addressed by the anomalous term '*mandong*', 'grandmother', though '*ma*', 'mother', may also be used. When so addressed she answers her husband's sister's son as '*gatnyimar*', 'son of my sister', or '*gatnyieti*', 'son of daughters', 'on account of her husband whose sister bore him', and not as 'grandson'. Nuer have given me two reasons for this usage. I was told that 'after the mother of your mother has died she (your maternal uncle's wife) turns herself into something like your grandmother'. This corresponds to a man calling his wife's elder sister 'mother' when his mother-in-law is dead and respecting her as a mother-in-law. I was also told that 'you call her (your maternal uncle's wife) *mandong* (grandmother) because if he (your maternal uncle) dies you may take his wife'. Though in my experience this seldom happens, the second explanation is consistent with another anomalous usage, the description by a woman of her husband's sister as '*mancoada*', which means literally 'mother of my husband', and of the son and daughter of her husband's sister as '*gatmancoada*' and '*nyamancoada*', 'my husband's mother's son' and 'my husband's mother's daughter'. In spite of these explanations it may be suggested that these peculiarities of behaviour and language relating to the maternal uncle's wife may be most appropriately interpreted in terms of the position of the maternal uncle in the kinship system.

The many observances relating to the mother's brother-sister's son relationship are indicative of this position, a further indication perhaps being the fact that, as will be seen in the following section, he alone among kinsfolk is not usually addressed by terms proper to the family. He is not, of course, strictly speaking a *gatnyiet* to his sister's son, but the relationship is one of this kind because his sister's children are *gaatnyiet* to him and his sons. Also in a

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

604 601 general sense, in contrast to the 'bulls', the maternal uncle is a relative through a female, the mother. Indeed, he is spoken about by Nuer as a kind of male mother himself. The significance of his position is due to the fact already drawn attention to, that there is a pull on a man in two directions in the Nuer kinship system, towards his father's kin and away from them towards his maternal kin, a tension especially marked in the case of an eldest child and in polygamous and concubinary families.

604 This balance is, as we have seen, very marked in the Nuer kinship system. When one lives among Nuer the relationships of *gwanlen, nar, wac, manlen*, and their children are hardly ever out of one's mind, for there are few conversations in which one or other of them does not figure; and in all discussions of a formal or ceremonial nature they go in pairs of opposites, the paternal uncle with the maternal uncle, the paternal aunt with the maternal aunt, and the sons of the one with the sons of the other. The balance between father's kin and mother's kin is always maintained on important occasions of social life, such as marriages, settlements of feuds, and religious feasts, when relationships are formally defined.

604 602 The balance is felt also by Nuer in their everyday life, and it strongly affects the relationships. A mother's brother, for example, is not just a mother's brother. He is, so to speak, a mother's brother and not a father's brother; and the fact that a man has a mother's brother towards whom he can turn in trouble affects his relations with his paternal kin. Relationships are tinged with their opposites. This is not a mere relation of opposites within a formal pattern. We have constantly noted throughout this book the very powerful and frequent attraction of the maternal kin in such a practical question as where a man resides. We have seen that a first-born ought to be brought up by his maternal grandparents; that fatherless young men often go to live with their maternal uncles; that youths frequently stay with their mother's people; that attraction to the maternal kin is accentuated by one or other form of concubinage; and that men easily identify themselves through female links with the lineage with whom they reside. A man has always the choice of several homes, and if he does not care to reside with his paternal kin he can attach himself to the home of other male or female kinsfolk. It is generally towards his mother's brother's people that he turns his eyes when

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

he has disputes with his paternal kin or feels unhappy among them. I had the impression that Nuer, who often talk about it, are very conscious of this pull away from the paternal kin which is personified in the maternal uncle. It signifies not only a balance between paternal and maternal kin within the kinship system but also a balance between the lineage and the society which contains it—between the lineage system and the total social structure.

The relationship between the *gaatnar*, the children of the mother's brother, and the *gaatwac*, the children of the father's sister, who belong to different lineages and, usually, different local communities, is considered by Nuer to be one of easy companionship. Friendship between a man and the sons of his maternal uncle is not blended with the reserve which difference of generation introduces into his relationship with their father. However, the tension personified in the mother's brother cannot but to some extent affect the relationship with his sons. The sons of the mother's brother are the counterpart to the agnatic cousins, the sons of the father's brother, and the two relationships seem for Nuer to stand in opposition.

It remains to say a few words about the *manlen*, the mother's sister. Nuer say of her that she is like the mother's brother, that 'she is your mother', and that she will love you as a son. 'Your mother's sister is your friend. Is she not the sister of your mother?' If you live at her home she will not, like the father's sister, favour her own children at your expense. You are her son and you will eat with her own child and share and share alike with him like brothers. When you visit her from a distance she sees that you are hungry from your journey and at once leaves off what she was doing to prepare a meal for you, and she pours her best butter over the porridge she has prepared for you. It is the mother's sister relationship that Nuer mostly invoke when hurling their spears in hunting and fishing: *'Tet cueda malene'*, 'My right hand, my mother's sisters.' This is equal to the *moc*, the invocation of a favourite ox. A mother's sister, like a father's sister, will be asked to contribute a heifer on the marriage of one of her nephews, but she, also, will not be expected to contribute again on the marriage of another son of the same sister. I was told that when a mother's sister dies her nephew may not visit her grave without a goat for sacrifice.

The mother's sister-sister's son relationship belongs to the

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

604 *gaatnyiet* category, for the children of each of two sisters are children of the daughters of the lineage to the other. Of all Nuer relationships it is the one of the most unadulterated benevolence. The two women and their children may generally be expected to live in different local communities, so that their interrelations are limited to friendly visits. There are none of the elements of opposition which make the relationship of mother's brother to sister's son more complex and explosive. The husbands of the sisters are not likely to be near kinsmen. There are between them none of the bridewealth transactions which complicate the mother's brother-sister's son relationship. There is no pull on the children towards the mother's sister as there is towards the mother's brother and the maternal kinsmen who live in the mother's home. It is perhaps because of the simple affection that the relationship implies to Nuer that *gatmalen*, son of my mother's sister, is a form of address sometimes used to unrelated friends whom a man wishes nevertheless to address by some kinship term.

III

600 I have been speaking up to the present of relations between close kin, the nuclear kin, who fall in relation to any particular person into a limited number of categories of relationship. These categories make a pattern which we call the kinship system. It was shown in the first chapter how all the members of a person's community are kin (including affines in this term) to him in one way or another, that is, they can all be placed in one or other of these categories. Clearly they are kin in a more remote sense. It is to this more general aspect of the kinship system that I now turn. It is perhaps most conveniently approached in the conventional manner of anthropological writings by an examination of the use of kinship terms.

601 Nuer kinship terms can be used descriptively to speak of any particular relationship, either with or without reference to a particular person. The construction of these terms is simple, e.g. the father's sister's daughter is *nyawac* (*nya*, daughter, *wac*, father's sister) and the mother's brother's son is *gatnar* (*gat*, son, *nar*, mother's brother). One can combine the primary terms to describe any relationship, e.g. *gatnyawac*, father's sister's daughter's son (*gat*, son, *nya*, daughter, *wac*, father's sister), and

11:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1945
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

593 that the groups differ. But when the sons become men, there is this
602 difference between them. A son in the simple legal family has no property
428 rights independent of his father. He does not own cattle in the family herd, which belongs to the father, and he only has disposal over cattle by permission of his father or as his father's heir. But when a man has married a wife to the name of his paternal uncle, or to the name of his brother, the son whom he begets is his father's brother's son, or his brother's son, and belongs to a different family and potentially to a different *gol* (household) to the man who has begotten him. When this son grows up his legal personality is not therefore merged in that of his genitor but in that of his dead pater whose status he assumes and whose property rights he inherits. If the pater left cattle the genitor ought to have held these cattle in trust for his son. Even if the pater, as is often the case, had no cattle when he died, he had potential rights in the herd and these rights his son inherits. Moreover he is almost certain to have had rights in the bride-wealth of female kinswomen and as these cattle became due to him they ought to have been held in trust for his son. The genitor has no legal rights over these cattle. Consequently if a son born in the union of ghost-marriage does not agree with the man who stands in the place of his pater, he is able more easily to take up an independent position, by assuming his pater's status, than a son born in the union of simple legal marriage. The one is already the head of a *gol*. The other only becomes the head of a *gol* on his pater's death. The genitor of a ghost-child is not his pater but a fellow-kinsman and to some extent a peer, and without the legal authority that a pater has over his son. However, I know of no serious dispute between a son born of ghost-marriage and his genitor for the genitor stands in the place of the pater and has the same desire to see his sons happy and wealthy. A son is generally content to let his genitor use his cattle as the genitor pleases during his boyhood, being well assured that when he is old enough to marry he will be well provided for and that far from the genitor's legal sons being favoured at his expense it is he who will receive priority.

604 When a man marries a wife to the name of his maternal uncle a more
428 delicate and complicated set of interrelations are brought about. Such a marriage usually takes place when the dead maternal uncle has no close agnatic kinsman, and the sister's son often marries him a wife with part of his maternal uncle's herd and takes charge of the remainder of it. In childhood the relations between parents and children are the same as those between members of a ghost-family in which pater and genitor are agnatic kinsmen, but when the sons grow up differences between them and their genitor are likely to be more acute if the genitor has abused his position of guardian and trustee. For whilst it is no great abuse of trust for a close agnatic kinsman of the pater to use the pater's cattle for his own purposes since he is a proper substitute for the pater in the sense that they belong to the same agnatic, and therefore cattle-group, the sister's son belongs to a different kinship group to the pater and one that does not herd its cattle in common with the pater's people nor share the obligations of mutual assistance and blood-revenge. When the daughters he begets

11:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1945
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

by his maternal uncle's wife are married he ought not to use the cattle for his own purposes but ought to keep them till the brothers of the girls are old enough to marry with them, for "the cattle of the father" and "the cattle of the mother" are theirs by right as heirs to their pater. Nevertheless he often takes advantage of the minority of the sons and this sometimes leads to altercations and bad feeling in the family. The history of my servant, Wia ♂, is a case of this kind.

A woman, Nyagen ♀, was stolen when a girl by the Anuak people and was married to an Anuak called Uluri ♂. By him she begat Cam ♂, so-called after an Anuak spirit. Nyagen ♀ then ran away from her husband taking her son with her to another Anuak district where she lived with a man called Wicoko ♂ by whom she bore Bithou ♂.[1] The Lou Nuer then took Nyagen ♀ and her sons captive during a raid into Anuakland. It was discovered that she was sister of Dar ♂, a Lou aristocrat, who took charge of her and married her to Carou ♂, a Gaajok aristocrat, who was also to take her son Bithou ♂ to his home, while her other son, Cam ♂, was to remain with Dar ♂ and be his heir, since he had no sons of his own. When Cam ♂ grew to boyhood he deserted his maternal uncle and went to live with his mother and her husband in Gaajok country and was there initiated into manhood. However, he quarrelled so much with members of Carou's village that he eventually came back to live with his maternal uncle. Before Dar ♂ died he told Cam ♂ to marry him a wife and Cam ♂ took Nyabuom ♀ in marriage to his name with the bride-cattle of Mer ♀, his maternal uncle's sister. Nyabuom ♀ bore Cam ♂ several sons and daughters. I shall not give further details here but mention only the outstanding and relevant facts. Nyabuom's other sons have died leaving Wia ♂, a youth of about twenty-five years of age, as sole survivor. Her daughters have been married and Cam has used their bride-cattle to marry further wives and for other private purposes. In Nuer law his portion consists only of the cattle due to him for having begotten and brought the girl up. "The cow of the paternal aunt" belongs to his mother who is still alive. In taking the whole of the bride-wealth he has therefore abused his trust as guardian of his maternal uncle's son and though he was not prevented from disposing of the cattle he was much criticised for doing so, and finally antagonised his son.

People said: "A good man who was in the position of Cam ♂ would regard Wia ♂ as a man of a different household (*labe ram goal gule*) and would say to him "You are a ghost-child, marry a wife for your lineage" (*Labi gat joka, kaeni cek thok dwielun*). Long ago he would have divided his herd and would have given Wia ♂ the cattle of his father's herd and of his sisters' marriages."

But Cam ♂ is quarrelsome and excitable, even unbalanced at times, and has resisted all pressure brought to bear on him to behave according to accepted standards. The kinsmen of Dar ♂ have protested in vain against his abuse of trust and there have been rows about the matter between Nyagen ♀, who supports her son, and her kinsman. The con-

[1] After the Anuak word 'to die' (*thou*). It is equivalent to the Nuer name Bilieu.

11:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1945
FJ22 Nuer FJ 22

604 428 578

sequence of Cam's action in everyone's opinion is to be seen in the death of all Wia's brothers. The ghost of Dar ♂ is angry because his cattle have not been used to marry his son a wife, and he has killed his sons.

Wia's position is a difficult one. He has been brought up by Cam and has always regarded him as a father. On the other hand he is disgusted with his unfair treatment. His attitude towards Cam ♂ is a mixture of affection and hatred. His attitude is not simply the blend of opposed feelings that one may find in an adult son's attitude to his father in many societies, perhaps any society, but is complicated by the fact that legally he is not Cam's son at all but a son of Dar ♂ and stands to Cam in the relationship of mother's brother's son. When I first knew Wia ♂ he was inclined to accept the position in mute protest and to leave his pater's kinsmen to fight for him a battle which as a son he felt unable to wage on his own behalf. When I met him again four years later his heart had hardened and he was more obstinate. He told me that he had first entered my service, come *rei Turuk*, " among the Turks ", because he could not abide his father's greed. When I left the country in 1933 he was glad to be passed on to my friend Mr. F. D. Corfield, District Commissioner of the Eastern Nuer, whose groom he became. I took him on again for a month in 1935 and we paid a joint visit to Yakwac, Cam's hamlet. Wia was being married at the time and had the full support of his kinsmen in the undertaking and in the struggle with his father which it entailed.

As a result of his service with Mr. Corfield and myself he had collected a small herd at the district headquarters of Nasser. Cam wished him to use this herd as bride-wealth for his marriage. He resolutely refused to do so saying that Cam's herd was composed entirely of cattle derived from his (Wia's) sisters' marriages and that in the past he had used other cattle which rightly belonged to Wia to marry additional wives for himself so that it was Cam's duty to obtain a wife for him out of the cattle of his herd. He was heir to his pater's cattle and it was Cam's business to see that he was married a wife with these cattle and not Wia's business to work with Englishmen to earn cattle for his own marriage. Wia said that he would keep the cattle he had earned and make a second marriage in the future. There were lengthy and sometimes violent discussions on this theme. Wia himself said little but refused to give away. He was so obviously acting within his rights that Cam eventually provided the bride-wealth. By this time, however, Wia was so estranged from his father that he told me he would never settle in his father's hamlet but would live for a time at Nasser and then settle with his pater's people in another village. He is not only angry at Cam's abuse of trust but is also aware that were he to settle at Yakwac and pasture his cattle there Cam is so reckless that he would either try to seize his cattle to contract another marriage or would involve himself in law-suits and having used all his own cattle in paying compensation and debts would then use Wia's cattle for the same purposes.

A man who cohabits with his brother's widow must also remember that he has full rights of parental control over the sons he begets by her only so long as they are minors. When a son has been initiated into manhood he

11:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1945
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

takes his pater's place in society and becomes head of his pater's *gol* (household). If his genitor is wise he will respect his son's independent status and will build him a byre next to his own and give him the cattle to which he is heir. When the genitor acts honestly difficulties between himself and his dead brother's son do not arise. His nephews (natural sons) will retain their respect and affection for him and will share their cattle with him. But Nuer are very greedy where cattle are concerned and the temptation to use a dead brother's herd to marry wives for himself during the minority of his sons is often more than a man can resist. This does not matter if he obtains the consent of the widow and explains what he is doing to his small sons and later, when they grow up, provides cattle for their marriages from his own herd. But Nuer say "Women have weak characters and cannot stand up against a man's will" and the genitor may put undue pressure on the widow to get her consent to use his dead brother's cattle for his own purposes, or even act without it. When the sons grow up he finds that he has no cattle left for them to marry with and they are resentful and want to know what has happened to their father's herd. Likewise their uncle may use the cattle of their sisters' marriages for his own purposes while they are still minors and they will not easily forgive this breech of trust when they grow up and want to marry. A son in this position is unlikely to move away from the village in which he has been brought up because this is his own village where his agnatic kinsmen live, but his relations with his uncle may become strained and he may harden in his insistence on his full legal rights in future instead of accepting a friendly give-and-take arrangement. If exasperated beyond endurance he may go to live with his maternal uncles. Conflicting loyalties often make a boy's position difficult, for as a son he feels he ought to respect and obey his "father" and as a nephew he feels he ought to insist on his rights.

Trouble is more likely to arise when a boy falls under the guardianship of his dead pater's brother and is not begotten by him. As explained elsewhere uncles frequently abuse their trust and dissipate the dead man's herd and in these circumstances his sons are almost certain to rebel when they become men.

The correct procedure is for the uncle and guardian to build a byre for his nephew and ward as soon as he is initiated and to hand over to him his dead father's cattle since he has now become head of an independent household. It is a great event when a boy comes of age and can take his dead father's place. The *gol* (household) once again has its head. The *luak* (byre) is once more occupied. The *mac* (fire) of the dead man has been rekindled. It is a day of great joy to the mother and of pride to the boy's kinsmen.

This correct procedure is well illustrated in the case of Ging ♂—Ging ♂ who was resident at Nyueny during my visit, at the home of Dhoal (Homestead No. XX), his sister's husband. His father was killed in fighting some years ago and he was brought up at the home of his mother's lover, Liep ♂—Deng ♂ of Kar village. When he was old enough to be initiated his dead father's brother brought him back to his paternal village

11:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1945
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

604 428 884 of Tutgar so that the rite might be performed there for it is a dishonour to a boy's agnatic kinsmen if it is not performed in their village and nothing more strongly binds a boy to them than the knowledge that they undertook the expenses of his initiation and the remembrance of the place where he suffered so great pain to win his manhood. After his initiation Ging ♂'s uncle built him a byre and handed over to him his father's cattle. Although he is only a small boy he is a *gwan cieng*, an independent householder. I used often to talk to him and he was very proud of his position and of having a byre and cattle of his own, and evidently liked and respected his uncle. By acting straightly with Ging his uncle firmly attached him to his father's people and though he pays, and will continue to pay, frequent visits to his mother and his foster-father he will never desert his agnatic kinsmen among whom he has his byre and herd.

The heritage of children must be respected. Thus, to give one more example: the widow, Nyaruithni ♀ (Homestead No. VIII), has her own byre where her dead husband's cattle are herded by her brother's son, Gai ♂. The byre and herd are being held in trust for her little son, Malith ♂, and when he is initiated he will assume sole charge of them. In a case of this kind it would be impossible for one of his maternal uncles to use the cattle during his minority for the others would not allow him to do so. Moreover, this would be a serious offence in Nuer eyes because when Nyaruithni ♀ was married they received her bride-cattle and it would be very wrong to add to these cattle those of her children. The husband's kinsmen would strongly object. Probably Malith ♂ will let Gai ♂ have a few cows to help him marry but this will be a gift out of affection and of gratitude for his services.

The difference between this case and that of Ging ♂ is that in Malith's case his maternal relatives are acting as his guardians whereas in Ging's case it was his paternal relations who were his guardians. It remains to be seen, however, whether Malith's paternal relations show sufficient interest in the boy to bring him to their home to be initiated. If they do this he will probably join them for good.

X

604 428 The opposition between the legal family and the biological family is most evident when a son is born in widow-concubinage. The opposition is clearer, and hence the sociological interest greater, because in ghost-marriage and leviritic marriage the genitor is a legal substitute for the pater whereas the genitor of a child born in widow-concubinage has no legal status as pro-pater. If the pater's brothers are alive and family feeling is strong they are likely to insist on his sons being initiated in their home and living with them after initiation. They may also bring his daughters to live with them and marry them from their home. The genitor cannot deny them their right when they tell him *Garena goat ghok ke*, "We want the children of our cattle". Thus it often happens that a boy is brought up amid one social group but belongs legally to a different social group. The sentiments of childhood attach him to the home of his mother and genitor and while he is small he does not think of

11:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1945
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

any other place as his home. But when he reaches manhood the sense of kinship so strong in Nuer, and the desire for the cattle of his pater's heritage, attract him to the village of his true paternal kinsmen.

Which group he finally joins depends on a number of conditions. The most important of these conditions is the existence of close kinsmen of the pater for if he left behind him brothers they are almost certain to want their child to live among them. Thus where we find adult sons living with their genitors in Nuerland it normally means that they have no very close agnatic kin whom they may regard as "fathers" and "brothers".

A further factor, closely bound up with that of the existence of close agnatic kin, is the disposition of herds and the allocation of rights in them. During a man's lifetime he usually divides his herds among his wives but they have only use of the cattle for milk and have no rights of disposal in them. They hold them in trust for their sons who after initiation have full control over them. When I suggested to Nuer that the widows might disperse and take the cattle to the homes of their brothers and lovers my remarks always evoked disapproval. "That is impossible. The eldest son (if initiated) would not allow it. He would say 'These are our father's cattle. They must remain in our father's byre'." If the widows scatter, the children and the cattle must remain in the homestead of the dead man. That is the rule and it is only when the dead man has no close kinsmen to enforce it that the widows may remove the children and the cattle. Even if they are permitted to do so the brother, or lover of a widow would take a serious risk were he to dispose of the cattle, for when the sons grow up he will have to give an account of his stewardship and if he has disposed of the cattle it is not unlikely, Nuer tell me, that one of the sons will split his head open with a club.

A widow is only allowed, in normal circumstances, to keep the cattle if she remains in her dead husband's village and takes a lover or is visited there by a lover from another village. If she goes to a lover's home she may, perhaps, take a cow to nourish her babies but the herd will remain with her husband's brothers. In either case the lover has no control over the cattle though sometimes the widow and her children, if she retains the herd in her husband's home, may assist the lover to marry by giving him the right. Thus Nyamani ♀ (Homestead No. IV) gave Panyuan ♂ a cow to assist him to marry, but Biliru ♂, her son, was old enough to understand what was happening and to give his consent. Nuer say that if a lover managed to use the cattle without hindrance at the time his sons would drive him away when they reached manhood and might even injure him. They would also raid (*kwal*) his herd to recompense themselves.

I do not know of a single instance among the widows who have left their husband's village and come to live at Nyueny where one of them has brought cattle with her. The cattle have been kept by the kinsmen of their husbands and the widows "have come to Nyueny only for children."

It is only in rare instances, where the pater has no close kinsmen, that a lover becomes guardian of the children and trustee for the cattle. When the daughters are married the "cattle of the father" and the "cattle of

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

789 A mother may curse her son for neglect, especially when she
593 is old and must rely on others for support, or for divulging her hiding-place to her husband if he is angry with her and seeks for her to chastise her. A mother's curse may have the same effects as a father's curse; but it is thought that, in addition, it has the particular effect of preventing the son from begetting male children. A mother's curse may thus injure the lineage, and in this respect her curse is more like that of the mother's brother than that of the father. I have also been told that a mother may, because she loves a son who has wandered to a distant country, curse him mildly so that he may suffer some minor sickness which will put him in memory of his home and cause him to return to it.

789 The curse of a mother's brother—at any rate that of a mother's
604 uterine brother—is also greatly feared by Nuer, for he, unlike the father, may curse a man 'to cattle', so that he loses his entire herd. Nuer seem to regard it as the worst of all curses and they recognize it as a strong sanction behind the demands of their mothers' brothers, where these are just. A sister's son who fails to carry out [753] certain duties or who fails to observe certain interdictions concerning his mother's brother may develop a disease called *keth nara* (disease of the *nar*, mother's brother), which may be fatal. Nuer describe it as *'cere ke biit'*, 'like to a curse'. People say that [603] the curses of father, mother, and mother's brother are the worst, though that of a paternal grandmother is also said to be bad, and [598] it is said that the curse of an eldest child is feared by his parents, especially his mother, and by his maternal uncle; in certain circumstances a sister's son, especially the eldest son of the sister, may curse his maternal uncle's herd. The only other kinsfolk of whom I have been specifically told that they may curse a man, in the sense that one may speak of a curse of the kinship category in which they stand, are the father's sister and the mother's sister, and Nuer say that these are very small curses and they do not therefore give them much thought; but a person standing in any social relationship to another may curse him if he has been wronged by him. However, the more distant the relationship the less effective the curse, because the less the obligation and therefore the less the wrong.

789 A run of misfortunes may be attributed to the curse of one of
593 these relatives. I tell one story in illustration. Luak, a man of the Leek tribe, refused to stay at home and help his father Thicjok to